Interesting Chat and Information for the Playgoer

Claudel the Mystic and Diplomat

Author of "The Tidings Brought to Mary" Is a Baffling Personality

By Nellie F. Turner

Miss Turner, who has lived for years in France, is a close friend of Claudel, and after the premiere of "The Tidings Brought to Mary" in Paris, accompanied the production to Frankfort, acting as prompter de luxe.

Paul Claudel is as much a source of wonder to his friends as to any stranger who finds irreconcilable Claudel the mystic and Claudel the diplomat. It is not unusual for a man whose daily interests are not literary to write poetry and have it published. Pierre Loti managed to be a consul and at the same time to write literature. But Pierre Loti was pre-eminently a writer. Claudel seems to live two separate lives, sincere and intense in each, and successful. His literary reputation is too secure to need my word, his success in his diplomatic career is indisputable.

The secret seems to lie in the complete detachment of his inner and outer life. When consul he went through his office routine as systematically as any bureau clerk. His manner was matter of fact, his mind keen, critical. He was to every one who entered his office the complete business man. I know there is no standard appearance for a poet, but Claudel least of all men suggested a remote mystic soul to the casual acquaintance.

He is of middle height, stocky, a face like a Roman centurion's. He gave the impression while in his office of a man of great dignity, sure contact with every day affairs, and a certain man-of-the-world air, witty and urbane, pleased those with whom he had to deal in the consular service.

His eyes are the key to the riddle if anything can be said to reveal something that one learns only after years of knowing a person. They are very brilliant, with a fixed, rather staring look. At the back of them is something remote, guarded, the spirit that comes out only in his work, and which he conceals successfully even in his personal life.

Claudel does not speak of himself, that self which is in his poems. He will not even discuss them. He was in Paris when the "Tidings Brought to Mary" was produced, and so far as I know did not see it.

Lugne Poe, of the Theatre l'Oevre, took the production of "The Tidings" to Frankfort-am-Main when Claudel was consul there. There was more popular interest in the arrival of the French players than there might have been otherwise. Claudel was besieged for interviews, comments, articles. But Claudel had nothing to say. He resisted all publicity, would not see the production of his play. He would have nothing to do with his business affairs as author. Lugne Poe had to handle everything for him.

Claudel the mystic, the writer, and Claudel the man of the world. The latter is always at your service, subtle, courteous, witty and charming, the Japanese ambassador, as one wishes, but the Claudel who writes is loath to share even the finished product. What he does must be dragged from him.

Paul Claudel, now in his fifty-fifth year, is the author of a number of poetic dramas—"The Tidings Brought to Mary," "The Exchange," "The Hostage" and other works. Here is his diplomatic "who's who": vice-consul in New York, 1893; consul in Boston, 1892; Shanghai, 1894; Foochow, 1896; chevalier Legion d'Honneur, 1905; first secretary of embassy at Peking, 1906; consul at Tientsin, 1906; consul at Prague, 1909; consul general at Frankfort, 1911; Hamburg, 1913. Sent upon diplomatic mission to Italy in 1915. Charge de legation, Rio De Janeiro, 1916; Minister to Brazil, 1917; Minister to Denmark, 1919; Ambassador to Japan, 1921.

William De Mille to Direct Screen Version of Grumpy

William De Mille has started at the Lasky studio his Paramount production of "Grumpy," which Clara Beranger adapted from the stage play by Horace Hodges and T. Wigney Percyval. The cast includes Theodore Roberts, May McAvoy, Conrad Nagel, Casson Ferguson, Charles Ogle, Bertram Johns, Bernice Frank and Fred Huntley. "Grumpy" is a mystery story which supplies Theodore Roberts with an unusually effective role, that of old Grumpy himself.

Most Photographed Girl To Be Photographed Some More

Jean Girardin, known from coast to coast as "the most photographed girl in America," will appear in Abbey Productions. Miss Girardin's face appears on more subway and streetcar advertisements than any other girl in the country. She has posed for all the magazine cover illustrators and is much in demand by national advertisers for her beautiful head portraits used by them as an aid in boosting their products.

At the Hippodrome

Charles Dillingham will inaugurate the New Year, the ninth of his management of the Hippodrome, with two gala performances of "Better Times." During the last week more than 76,000 persons saw the production and the attendance for the season approached the million mark. "The Story of the Fan," the aquatic finale, and Orlando's Horses are among the many features of the new spectacle.

MME. F. SHEVTCHENKO in "TSAR FYODOR IVANOVITCH." OPENING PRODUCTION of THE MOSCOW ART THEATER

ELEANOR DAWN in "THE CLINGING VINE"

MAUDE HANAFORD in "THE EGOTIST" (Duguerre Studio)

GLADYS WALTON, in "THE LADY IN ERMINE." (Apeda)

LOTUS ROBB, in "JOHANNES KREISLER"

LOWELL SHERMAN, in "THE MASKED WOMAN" (White)

MABEL FORD, at Palace.

ROSALIE DOLCE, in "MAIN STREET FOLLIES."

OTTO KRUGER, as SHAKESPEARE, in "WILL SHAKESPEARE" (Bruguiere Photo)

No Need to Learn Russian to See the Moscow Art Players

The task of unlocking the enjoyment of witnessing a play in a foreign language has been faced with characteristic daring and ingenuity by Morris Gest, under whose direction the Moscow Art Theatre begins its engagement in New York at Jolson's Theater Monday, January 8. Needless to say, all of the plays in the broad repertoire ofthis famous theater will be given in Russian. The problem of making them not only comprehensible but irresistibly compelling to an audience to whom Russian is the most foreign of all foreign languages might have overawed any manager.

Just what Mr. Gest has planned and carried out to overcome this apparently insuperable obstacle makes a story fascinating in itself. That story is told here for the first time. This same problem, only in far simpler form, faced Mr. Gest when he brought Balieff's Chauve-Souris to America a year ago. The Chauve-Souris, too, has been given in Russian. Not one in twenty of its far-flung and numerous patrons has understood a word of this difficult tongue, but that has been no barrier. True, Balieff's own running remarks on his entertainment, delivered in a mangled but delightfully humorous English, have served to make essential points clear. For the rest, program notes, translations of some of the songs, and a frank dependence on the pictorial and pantomimic features of the entertainment, which know no limitations of language, have served to interpret the matter and the manner of the Chauve-Souris.

On the contrary, the Moscow Art Theater will have no conferencier, no Balieff, few first aids in the way of song and dance. The appeal to the eye through costumes and scenery will be as strong as that of the Chauve-Souris and there will be the appeal of the pantomime.

But Mr. Gest was not satisfied with these natural advantages. He wished to make sure, and doubly sure, that not only the larger details of the stories of the plays which Stanislavsky and his artists will give would register with their audiences, but also all the finer and more elusive details of song, situation and character. As long ago as last April when he first began negotiations to bring the Moscow Art Theater to New York, Mr. Gest laid out in his mind his plan of action. As soon as he knew what plays would be included in the New York repertoire he ascertained the fact that one of them had never before been translated into English and that the rest existed only in inferior translations.

So he engaged Miss Jenny Covan, who had had experience in this field, to make entirely new translations of all the plays. These translations, under the editorial supervision of Oliver M. Saylor, he had published in handy pocket form for the use of prospective spectators, after the manner of librettos at the opera. In order to make sure that every one would be provided with these translations, no matter what their circumstances, he has placed them on sale at 20c a copy, which is less than the actual cost of preparation, printing and publication.

Realizing that not every one would have the time to read these translations in advance, Mr. Gest is having prepared for the regular theater program an unusually detailed but extremely simple and clarifying synopsis of each play, scene by scene. This synopsis will first of all identify each of the characters, and then will follow them through each act in their various groupings as the story of the play unfolds. When these various interpretive means are taken into consideration and when it is remembered that every newspaper will carry its own interpretation and synopsis, there will be no occasion for any spectator to complain that Russian was not included in his high school or college curriculum.

Lowell Sherman Tells How to Apply Fine Points of Villainy

Lowell Sherman, slightly winded from his tremendous exertions in the second act of "The Masked Woman," but, if anything, a trifle more suave than Satan, lounged gracefully in his famous fur-lined dressing gown in his dressing room in the Eltinge Theater and directed at the interviewer an ironic, sardonic, satiric smile so fleeting that the reporter thought for a moment that he was making a face at somebody behind him.

In a second Mr. Sherman's facile countenance had resumed its customary expression of urbane and gratified evil. But only for a second. He did it again. The reporter slouched down in his seat.

"Be cruel, but elegant," said Mr. Sherman, adjusting his monocle. "Lift your eyebrow, thus—while you lift the club."

Again that smile. The chilled monocle fell into the purple folds of the gown.

"Be remorseless. After you have betrayed them, meet their reproaches with an icy, inscrutable, irritating smile—like this"——

He illustrated. It was terrific.

"When you have them in your power—which takes about five minutes—hurt their feelings continuously, but suavely, delicately, elegantly. Scrutinize them through your monocle, then tell them they are not looking well. But smile.

"Sometimes, apropos of nothing, you might suddenly box their ears, but never get ruffled, and smile at them this way. It bewilders them and intrigues them tremendously.

"After you have stolen their pearls let some hated rival wear them, and take her where the victim will be sure to see you. As her face blanches, give her a smile—Mephistophelian, momentary, exasperating, and pass on with the enemy.

"Never keep an appointment. Appear, immaculately groomed, a week later, on the same day, at the same hour. Be perfectly at ease. The more embarrassing the situation for her, the more completely she will be in your power. It intensifies passion.

"Magnificent colors attract women as bright flowers do bees. Be most splendid with those women whose passion for you is most hopeless. It is delightfully satanic.

Louise Galloway Plays Flapper Grandma in 'The Clinging Vine'

A flapper grandmamma, with her fluffy white hair cut in the newest French bob, enjoys a large share of the comedy honors in "The Clinging Vine," the new Henry W. Savage musical production at the Knickerbocker. In this comedy of a business girl's romance Miss Zelda Sears, the author, has made the grandmother almost of equal importance to the heroine herself. Grandma is really responsible for the entire plot, which has to do with a modern American business girl.

This girl, a sort of mixed paint queen out of Omaha, who took more pride in the dividends her firm declared that in the cut of her "good serviceable suit," has success in business, but not in romance. On a hurried business trip East she visited her grandmother, who has been growing young as the paint queen grows old, and then a transformation begins. Grandmamma turns her charge into a "clinging vine," whose conversation is almost limited to yes and nay, except that she sometimes murmured "Do go on" and "Aren't you wonderful!" And while grandma delightfully watches the entire male population of the neighborhood lose their hearts her granddaughter gives her an extra thrill by putting over the shrewdest business deal of a brilliant career.

When Miss Sears conceived this bobbed-haired fairy grandma for her plot she had a certain actress definitely in mind for the rôle. This was Miss Louise Galloway, the bedimpled little lady who used to make masculine hearts thump as the soubrette of "Way Down East." More recently she has been appearing in "mother" rôles. She spent long seasons in "Sinners," "The Lottery Man," "Her Soldier Boy," "Polly With a Past" and "The Gold Diggers," most of the time playing pathetic or emotional mothers and never having a chance to display the sparkling comedy that distinguishes her performance in "The Clinging Vine."

"I'd never expect a manager who had seen me as one weeping mother after another to consider me for a frolicsome grandma," Miss Galloway admitted after her opening performance last Monday night. "That is, no manager except Mr. Savage. He could never see me even as a mother. He remembered me in ingenue days, and somehow or other got the idea that I was a Peter Pan.

"When Zelda Sears called me up one afternoon last summer and said 'Louise, I want you to play a grandma in a play I've just finished, which is to be produced by Mr. Savage,' I said 'Oh, Zelda, I'd adore to be anything in any play of yours, but Mr. Savage can't see me as a mother, let alone a grandmother.'

"'He'll see you as this grandmother,' said Zelda confidently. 'She's younger than the soubrette you played in "Way Down East."'

"Of course, I could hardly wait to read the part," rippled Miss Galloway, "and when I read it I could hardly wait to play it. This flapper grandma has such youth and vivacity the very idea of her ought to cheer up a lot of prospective grandmas.

"Because," observed Miss Galloway earnestly, "she is not just a pretty stage portrait. She is a living, breathing, perfectly possible character. The years have only added to her charms, because her mind is young and happy and her heart is gay. Having played a good many sad, mournful, maternal roles, you can imagine what a joy it is for me to blossom forth, a generation advanced, as a blithesome grandma."

Lucille Watson Tries To Make Characters On Stage Real Persons

To be on the stage some twenty years and play a great variety of rôles, yet to like best those in three recent plays, would sound like a whacking disappointment for Lucille Watson. But there can be no real disappointment in work well done and the Queen of "The Dragon," that comedy of Lady Gregory's, at the Earl Carroll Theater, owns bulging scrapbooks of notices signalizing her as an outstanding figure in nearly every play in which she has appeared.

"You must feel your part to really act it," says Miss Watson. "All emotions must be felt ere they can be expressed. Acting is not something of eccentric externals, not pantomimic trickery, but something expressed from within. At least, that is what I believe, for I am a naturalist. But, mark you, I do not mean to just feel without the intelligent conception of the character. All acting is a mental art. Think and feel the character and the externals will largely take care of themselves, granting a definite individuality that will hold attention, to some degree, of itself, and granting, too, the essential skill in control of physical visualization which comes with experience. To me a false intonation is an artistic offense, an impossible happening if one is thinking every word and act of one's part freshly as if for the first time.

"While I take a lot of pains with every part that I play," continues Miss Watson, "I might almost say that I finished studying long ago. I mean, I now live each part. When I have a new character to present I read the play and I try to analyze just what kind of person the author meant from her lines. And then I try to find out more about her from the way in which other characters in the play react to her. In other words, one must take the sketchy outline of a character and read into it, filling it with personality.

"One of the most difficult things for a character actress—and that is what I am—one of the traps she must jealously guard herself against is the dead level of presenting types instead of individual persons. Make for yourself a picture, a conception of the life of the character from infancy up to the beginning of the action of the play, try to discover her thoughts, feelings and what she does off stage. It all throws light on what she is and why she is it on the stage."

Balieff Offers His Fourth and Last Bill to New York

On the occasion of its 400th performance in New York, next Thursday evening, Balieff's Chauve-Souris will give the premier of its fourth and final program in this country at its home at the Century Roof Theater. Besides celebrating the arrival at the fourth century mark, this gala performance will serve also to welcome to this country Constantin Stanislavsky and his fellow artists of the Moscow Art Theater, who are due to arrive the preceding day from their tour of Western Europe. Stanislavsky and his players, of whom Balieff was one before the founding of his Chauve-Souris in Moscow fifteen years ago, will be present at the Century Roof next Thursday evening as guests of honor.

For the farewell program Balieff provides fresh examples of the humor, charm, color, melody and fantasy for which his intimate little playhouse has become noted in the eleven months of its sojourn in New York, and at the urgent request of the clientele of the Chauve-Souris several of the most popular numbers of previous bills will be revived, one or two in the form which first endeared them to the public and the rest with new songs, new steps and new scenery. Finally, the new bill will be distinguished by several surprise numbers.

This program will round out the present season in New York and at the close Balieff and his company will return to Paris.

First on the program will be "Zarya Zaryanitsa," a Russian sacred legend, by the well known story-teller and dramatist Sologub, set to music by Suvorovsky and performed against backgrounds by Balieff's artist, Soudeikine. "Porcelaine de Maine," or "The Swing," will follow in second position, a new number in Balieff's series of figurantes come to life, with music by Archangelsky and settings by Remisoff.

At the urgent demand of his followers Balieff has restored the "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers. "Toi qui connais," an old, popular French song, a genre for which Balieff has manifested a distinct flare, will follow it, and it in turn will be succeeded by the "Tartar Dance," by Kotchetovsky. The outstanding hit of the current bill of the Chauve-Souris, "Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre," will be held over, but will have the advantage of new figures in its processional. The first half of the program will be brought to a close by "The Gypsies and the Black Hussars," a new number in which the whole company will participate, and will include gypsy and military songs not heard heretofore.

The comic gem of the original program, Tchekhoff's "The Sudden Death of a Horse; or, the Greatness of the Russian Soul," will start off the second half of the program. For contrast it will be followed by "E Ukhnim," the Volga boat song, sung by a chorus of the men of the company against a background designed by Remisoff after the canvas of the master of modern Russian painting, Ryepin. "La Soirée Intime," an old French ballad arranged by Archangelsky from the score of Weckerlin, will follow, a moment of combined song and dance.

Balieff's genius for new and unusual comic effects will have free play in the next number of the program, "Napoleon's Love," a mock-heroic scene from Bonaparte's amorous life. It will be followed by a parody on "Il Barbiere di Sivigila," in the manner of "La Grande Opera Italiana" of the original bill, done with marionettes to the music of Rossini, as arranged by Archangelsky in costumes and against settings designed by Soudekine. "Alaverdi," or "Scenes From Life in the Caucasus," danced to music from Rubinstein's "Demon" and other sources of Russian melody, will reveal the art of Remisoff and enlist all the men of the company. The concluding number of the new bill will be "Kamarinskaya," in which Kotchetovsky will give a characteristic Russian dance with the assistance of a typical Russian chorus.

Ben-Ami Sad As Kreisler of A Century Ago

His Idea of Heaven Is Own Your Own Theater and Play as You Will

Ben-Ami fears that wonder in the minds of the audiences who view the transformation scenes in his new play, "Johannes Kreisler," must swerve the interest from the theme, the acting and the music, and probably he is right. It is not possible to sit in a darkened theater and suddenly see a brightly lighted patch up in the air with real people like Ben-Ami and Lotus Robb acting in the middle of it without wondering how it is done.

Then, in some scenes, the star appears to be in two places at the same time—a thing which even Einstein never claimed was possible—and again he floats through the air and clasps the form of Lotus Robb in his arms before he floats back to heaven.

"It is full of tricks," said Ben-Ami lightly, from out the folds of a blue linen smock, "full of tricks which amuse the spectators, apparently, but give no chance to the actor. How can a man put his heart into a scene when he is still panting from a leap to upper right from lower left? No, it cannot be done." When asked what he thought of the possibilities of a run on Broadway the star appeared indifferent.

"I do not care for long runs," said Ben-Ami. "They are a menace to art: for an actor soon becomes mechanical in a part and he plays it without realizing what he is doing. How often I hear an actor say, 'What luck I have had! Three seasons in the same play and still going strong!' No man who talks that way cares for acting really. He is just working at it."

"And should you like to have only short runs?" Ben-Ami was asked.

"I should—not more than six weeks for any one play. But lest that sound inconsiderate, when viewed from the producers' standpoint, I hasten to add that what I desire most is a repertoire where I might produce plays for a few weeks and have them ever interesting and new. That is my idea of heaven!"

When it was suggested to Ben-Ami that he was himself a very interesting personality and that the public might enjoy hearing something about him, he answered, "If any one believes me to be interesting, it is because he does not know anything about me. It is better so."

When he was asked if he approved of happing endings, Ben-Ami replied: "There are no endings. When we say 'a happy ending' what we really mean is that the way has been paved for a happy beginning."

Ben-Ami seems very handsome and unhappy, but there are people who say that the true Russian artist is only happy when he is unhappy.

Estelle Winwood Does Not Care to Travel in Circles

"I'm glad you came to see me," said Estelle Winwood in her dressing room at the Greenwich Village Theater as she hastily removed all traces of "The Red Poppy" and prepared to be herself again. A tea party for two was waiting, she told us, but she added, "I like you."

Now, this was something for Miss Winwood. She doesn't care for very many people and she doesn't tell them about it, as a rule, even when she does. She is like that, and, as a matter of fact, that is why we like her. Because she is difficult.

"Of course," she said, in that attractive British voice of hers, when we told her so, "I am that way, too. The only horses I ever cared to ride were those who didn't like the saddle; the only men I ever care for are those who—well, you know how it is, don't you?" To which we replied: 'Yes, indeed! It's like that, isn't it—just like that?"

If Miss Winwood lets you stay for five minutes, make the most of it, for she is always flying away to an engagement as soon as the curtain goes down on the last act. It was just as usual this time. "I'll talk while I dress," she said. "I'm running away to tea, and the handsomest man in New York it waiting for me, right now."

"How can that be when he is waiting for us at the foot of these iron stairs we have just climbed to your dressing room?"

"Call him up and have this settled once for all," said Miss Winwood. And when "the handsomest man" appeared at the top of the stairs she said, laconically, "You win," and then to him: "I have seen you on the screen and you are a very fine actor. Why do you not go on the stage? Do you like my play, and isn't Bela Lugosi a fascinating Apache?"

"Yes, and so are you," replied the handsomest man. "Your last scene is one of the most beautiful things I have seen on the stage."

"Ah!" sighed Miss Winwood happily. "May heaven bless you for those words. It is hard, but I care only for difficult parts—a different sort each season. Just to keep on playing one's self is not being an actress."

"Well, you are an actress—a real one, a scintillating one," we assured Miss Winwood. "Never shall we forget you in 'Too Many Husbands.' Farce is best of all for you. But, of course, you were inimitable in 'Madame Pierre.' And then there was that dainty thing you did in 'Moliere'—Armande she was called, wasn't she? And there was 'The Circle.'"

H. U.